

## Good-Rain Syndrome Makes Ranchers Vulnerable To All Manner of Peril

By Monte Noelke

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MERTZON — Since spring rains have covered the Shortgrass County, clothing all portions of weed, grass and flowers, hopes are high in every segment of the population. Even the city folks are sharing in the joy of an assured growing season.

These upswings invariably bring on too much complacency. It is astounding to observe how fast a rancher's personality changes after a good rain.

Yesterday, for instance, I was watching the patrons of a large bank over in San Angelo. The biggest standouts were the booted and hatted hombres waiting in the part of the bank know as the "loan and renewal lineup."

In case you are unfamiliar with this section, it is the area where the chairs are strategically placed so the borrower can face the keeper of his fate, yet still see enough open space through the huge windows to suppress the urge to bolt for the outdoors. People of waggish nature sometimes call this the "loan and renewal row." It is, however, very, very shaggy behavior to make fun of livestock bank or bankers. Legislation should be passed to forbid that type of foolery. Mere humorous innuendoes are bad enough.

Now there was nothing unusual about seeing a trio of ranch citizens visiting a bank. Ranchers were pushing at the doors when the first bank on earth was opened. What was strange about this group was the way they were sitting. Instead of being in the normal edge-of-the-chair pose, they were slouched over as if they were preparing to review the year's best chamber music. If I hadn't known better, I'd have guessed they were victims of prosperity.

My first inclination was to slosh cold water in their faces. With lamb crops down all over the country and the cost of borrowed money going up, a sheep and cow herder has about as much business relaxing in a banking house as a croupier has carrying on a game of blindman's bluff during working hours. Considering the shape we're in, blinking our eyes in public could be dangerous enough. What those fellows' idea was is a mystery. A graduate student from a California university ought to have more sense than to doze in a bank.

Don't let this mislead you. I am not saying that the bankers are the only ones to watch out for. They're just part of it. Everybody who comes into the lending and depositing houses is dealing in money. From the porters to the customers, every last one of them is thinking about money in one form or another.

Some years ago, a banker on the edge of the Shortgrass Country took off with a bundle of his jug's cash. The whole pack left behind fell out with him — depositors, stockholder, the board of directors and his fellow officers immediately denied their old friend. All they could think about was how much money they'd lost. None of them cared what grave problems had prompted the president to leave town.

The possibility that he could have been faced with keeping up a string of running horses or some other harmless hobby was never brought into the picture.

Money, and the loss of such, was the sole basis of his enemies' displeasure. In a matter of days, his name was stricken from every Christmas card list in town, and his credit rating was badly damaged. It could have been this poor soul's childhood dream to live in Buenos Aires, yet no one cared to know. As in every other instance where banks and banking have been involved, the craze for coin had once again banished human understanding.

I don't know when those three old boys finally aroused from their chairs to finish their business. They were still sitting there when I left.

Putting so much faith in rain is going to be one our paths to ruination. Mark these words: if the habit isn't halted, it will lead us into bad trouble one of these days.